

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

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SCEM-02 TRSE-00 EURE-00 RSR-01 INRE-00 /134 W

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P 031617 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0212

UNCLAS LONDON 03875

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, UK

SUBJECT: MINERS OPPOSE STRIKE; LONDON DOCKS DOWN

REF: LONDON'S 3812

1. SUMMARY: A SIGNIFICANT PLUS FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S COUNTER- INFLATION PROGRAM WAS SEEN APRIL 3 WHEN THE MINERS VOTED OVERWHELMINGLY AGAINST STRIKE ACTION OVER THE NATIONAL COAL BOARD'S PHASE TWO PAY OFFER. HOWEVER, CLOUDS STILL HUNG OVER THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SCENE AS LONDON DOCKS WERE CLOSED FOR THE SECOND DAY IN A DISPUTE RELATED TO A PHASE TWO WAGE OFFER. END SUMMARY.

2. BRITAIN'S COAL MINERS, REPRESENTING ONE OF THE MOST MILITANT SECTORS OF BRITISH LABOR AND THE ONE WHICH EFFECTIVELY DEMOLISHED THE GOVERNMENT'S WAGE NORMS IN THE EIGHT- WEEK STRIKE LAST YEAR, HAVE DECIDED AGAINST A STRIKE CHALLENGE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S PHASE TWO WAGE LIMITS. OF THE VOTES CAST, 143,006 OR 63.38 PERCENT WERE AGAINST INDUSTRIAL ACTION AND 82,631 OR 36.62 FAVORED SUCH A COURSE. A TOTAL OF 290,000 PAPERS WERE DISTRIBUTED IN THE SECRET BALLOT AND 225,637 RECEIVED. AFTER ANNOUNCING THE RESULT, JOE GORMLEY, UNCLASSIFIED

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NUM ( MINERS UNION) PRESIDENT, SAID THAT THE MINERS HAD DECIDED THAT THEY HAD TO ACCEPT THE LATEST OFFER OF THE COAL BOARD WHICH ADHERES STRICTLY TO THE PHASE TWO PAY LIMITS. GORMLEY SAID HE WAS " TERRIBLY SURPRISED" BY THE SIZE OF THE MAJORITY AGAINST STRIKE ACTION, ADDING " OUR MEMBERS HAVE TOLD US THAT THEY DO NOT WANT TO BE INVOLVED IN INDUSTRIAL ACTION THIS YEAR". UNDER NUM RULES A 55 PERCENT VOTE IS REQUIRED FOR AN OFFICIAL NATIONAL STRIKE.

3. THE MINERS' ACTION WILL NO DOUBT BE VIEWED BY GOVERNMENT MINISTERS AND OTHERS AS A THUMPING VICTORY FOR THE HARD- LINE STANCE OF THE GOVERNMENT AGAINST BREACHES OF ITS PAY GUIDELINES BY STRIKING UNION MEN. COMING ON THE HEELS OF SIMILAR ACTION BY THE GAS WORKERS AND INCREASING SIGNS THAT TEACHERS, CIVIL SERVANTS AND THE HOSPITAL WORKERS MAY FOLLOW SUIT, THE PROSPECTS FOR LABOR PEACE SEEM GREATLY ENHANCED.

4. WHEN ASKED BY NEWSMEN IF THE MINERS' DECISION MEANT THAT THEY WOULD NOT JOIN THE MAY DAY PROTEST STRIKES, GORMLEY REPLIED, " IT WOULD SEEM FROM THE VOTE TODAY THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF CALLING THE MINERS OUT ON MAY 1 WILL NOT BE ON". A FINAL DECISION ON THIS, HOWEVER, REMAINS FOR THE NUM EXECUTIVE BOARD AT ITS NEXT MEETING.

5. COUNTERING THIS GOOD NEWS, HOWEVER, FROM THE GOVERNMENT' S VIEWPOINT, IS THE SHUT- DOWN OF THE WHOLE OF LONDON' S ENCLOSED DOCKS, INCLUDING THE CONTAINER PORT AT TILBURY. THE DISPUTE IS OVER GOVERNMENT PAY POLICY. ALTHOUGH THE DOCKERS HAVE ACCEPTED A PAY AWARD IN LINE WITH PHASE TWO, IN REPRISAL THEY VOTED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE FLEXIBLE MANNING AGREEMENT OF TWO YEARS AGO. WHEN THE DOCKERS REFUSED TO ACCEPT ASSIGNMENTS GIVEN THEM UNDER THIS AGREEMENT, DOCK EMPLOYERS BEGAN SENDING THEM HOME. AFTER THIS, THE MEN VOTED TO STRIKE. THE DOCK EMPLOYERS HAVE OFFERED TO ENTER TALKS BUT THE DOCKS ARE STILL LIKELY TO BE DOWN FOR THE REST OF THE WEEK, AND THERE ARE HINTS OF POSSIBLE SYMPATHY STRIKES AT LIVERPOOL AND OTHER PORTS.

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\*\*\* Current Handling Restrictions \*\*\* n/a

\*\*\* Current Classification \*\*\* UNCLASSIFIED

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** n/a  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 03 APR 1973  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** n/a  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** n/a  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:**  
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**Original Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
**Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 73 LONDON' S 3812  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** kellerpr  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 03 AUG 2001  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <03-Aug-2001 by reddocgw>; APPROVED <16-Aug-2001 by kellerpr>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** <DBA CORRECTED> gwr 971118  
**Subject:** MINERS OPPOSE STRIKE; LONDON DOCKS DOWN  
**TAGS:** ELAB, UK  
**To:** EUR  
**SECSTATE WASHDC**  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005